



**City of Seattle**  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

**Department of Planning and Development**  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Application Number:** 3019278

**Applicant Name:** Steven Vrabel, Vrabel Architects  
for Alan Lippman

**Address of Proposal:** 906 NE Ravenna Blvd

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Land Use Application to allow an addition to an existing structure and change use from single family residential to multifamily townhouse.

The project requires the following approvals:

**Variance-** to allow a portion of principal structure to extend into required west side setback and allow a portion of the existing structure to remain within the required west side setback, SMC 23.45.518.

**Variance-** to allow a façade length greater than 65% of the lot line, SMC 23.45.527.B.1.

**Site and Vicinity**

**Site Zoning:** Lowrise (LR1)

**Nearby Zones:** Neighborhood Commercial (NC2-40)  
Single Family (SF5000)

**Existing Use:** Single Family Residential

**Project Description:**

The applicant proposes to allow an addition to an existing structure and change the use from single family residential to multifamily townhouse.



Public Comment:

The public comment period ended on January 28, 2015. Comments were received and carefully considered, to the extent that they raised issues within the scope of this review. These areas of public comment related to parking and the neighborhood context. Comments were also received that are beyond the scope of this review and analysis per SMC 23.40.020.

**ANALYSIS - VARIANCE**

As provided in SMC [23.40.020](#), variances from the provisions or requirements of Seattle Municipal Code Title 23 shall be authorized only when all of the facts and conditions stated in the numbered paragraphs below are found to exist:

- 1. Because of unusual conditions applicable to the subject property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of this Land Use Code would deprive the property of rights and privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same zone or vicinity;***

The subject property is unusual in several regards.

**Size, shape, and orientation.** The site abuts a single public right of way, NE Ravenna Blvd which defines its southwest property line as front – see Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) [23.84A.024](#).

As a flag shaped site, the subject property presents roughly 41 linear feet along NE Ravenna Blvd and 12 linear feet to the alley. The flag portion constitutes 12.13% of the 3955 square foot lot and due to this configuration the buildable lot square footage is reduced. Development on the site is further constrained by the front lot line along NE Ravenna. The lot line is parallel to the angled right of way. As a result the lot line on the west is roughly 82 linear feet while the east is 95 feet, excluding the flag portion. In Seattle's built environment, residential sites generally present their narrow dimension to a right of way, so that the deeper front and rear yards may abut these lines, and narrower side yards abut the longer ones. The nearby properties along NE Ravenna Blvd also abut the right of way at an angle. While it's common for front lot line to abut property right of way at an angle, typically such properties do not also include a flag lot shape as well.

Other properties in this zone and vicinity include development that typically occupies the full width of their sites, minus areas devoted to relatively narrow side yards. SMC 23.45.518 would require a side setback of 7 feet average with 5 feet minimum setback and SMC 23.45.527.B.1 would require that the length of a façade facing a side lot line not exceed 65 percent of the length of that lot line.

The existing structure is a single family residence, which has different minimum yard (setback) requirements than multi-family uses in this zone. The existing structure complies with development standards for single family uses in this zone, but it doesn't comply with multi-family uses in this zone. The proposal is to keep the existing structure, but change the use to multi-family (townhouse). The strict application of the Land Use Code would require removing part of this structure to comply with the development standards for multi-family uses in this zone. There are several other single family structures in the zone and vicinity that are not required to comply with these development standards.

The proposed addition at the north edge of the site would need to be set back a minimum of 5'0" and an average of 7'0" from the west property line. The west façade would also need to be a maximum of 65% of the length of the lot line. Similarly, yard and parking location standards would constrain the area available for the proposed townhouse. Other properties in the zone or vicinity are a comparable size to the development that would result from the proposed variances. The shorter west lot line and unusual shape of the property result in unusual conditions that would require smaller development than exists on nearby lots in the zone and vicinity.

This site's unusual conditions and strict application of the Land Use Code would therefore deprive this property of rights and privileges enjoyed by other comparable properties.

***2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which the subject property is located;***

The existing structure is sited at an angle to the existing lot line and encroaches a maximum of 2 ½" into the required west setback. The existing structure is a single family residence, which meets Land Use Code criteria. The proposal includes changing the use from single family residence to multi-family residence (townhouse). A variance is needed to allow the existing structure to remain within the 5' minimum setback for the new townhouse use. The project as proposed will include a 14 foot front (south) setback where a 5 foot minimum / 7 foot average is required.

The proposed townhouse unit addition at the north edge of the site is aligned with the existing structure; it will not encroach any nearer to the neighboring property to the west than the existing residence currently does. For the addition, the proposed west side setbacks are 5'-4" at a minimum and 5'-6" at a maximum, providing for a roughly 28 feet wide addition on a 39 foot wide lot. This addition results in development of the lot that is comparable with development on nearby properties in the zone and vicinity.

Since the front lot line is parallel to the angled right of way, the west lot line is 13 feet shorter on the west than it is on the east, excluding the flag portion. The proposed addition is 15 feet in depth. In order to match the depth on the east, the proposed addition exceeds the maximum façade length by approximately 3 feet and proposes a combined west facade length of 53 feet.

The applicant states that the project does not exceed the minimum necessary to afford relief. The resulting development is two three-story townhouse units. It is a use and scale that is consistent with new development on sites that are comparable in size, location, and zone. As such, it is not a grant of special privilege.

***3. The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or vicinity in which the subject property is located;***

As proposed, this project will preserve the front façade and development pattern of the existing NE Ravenna Blvd streetscape. The additional townhouse structure to the north will not be significantly different from what would be currently allowed by the Land Use Code. In footprint, the proposal is roughly similar to what would be currently allowed by the Land Use Code. The resulting development will set back from its property lines in much the same fashion as homes on other properties in the zone and vicinity.

Given that the existing structure and addition are similar in size to the nearby development and that the total development is similar to would be currently allowed by the Land Use Code, it is clear that the design of the structure will be compatible with the character of the other structures in the vicinity.

***4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this Land Use Code would cause undue hardship or practical difficulties;***

As described in response to the criteria above, the literal interpretation and strict application of the Land Use Code would result in a buildable area that is more constrained than comparably sized and situated lots in the zone and vicinity. It would result in a jogged addition and a more constrained building area, due to the unusual lot configuration. The west side setback and west façade length variances will permit a more usable building footprint for the new townhouse unit while taking into account the limitation of the unusual lot shape. Practically, compared with the other nearby sites, the flag portion of the site would result in a 12% reduction in the buildable area that would be typical on lots of comparable size. In the context of this site, DPD considers such a reduction to present hardship or practical difficulty.

***5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of the Land Use Code and adopted Land Use regulations for the area.***

In Lowrise zones, the Land Use Code provides for development of multifamily structures, with limits on height, lot coverage, and a general siting organization that limits development at the periphery of sites. The proposed development achieves those intents. The public use and interest are served by the proposal since all applicable criteria are met and the proposal creates the potential for additional housing opportunities in the City. DPD determines that the project meets this criterion.

**DECISION - VARIANCE**

DPD **grants** the variances identified above, with no conditions.

Signature: retagonzales-cunneutubby for Date: June 1, 2015  
Magda Hogness  
Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

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**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ISSUANCE OF YOUR MASTER USE PERMIT**

**Master Use Permit Expiration and Issuance**

The appealable land use decision on your Master Use Permit (MUP) application has now been published. At the conclusion of the appeal period, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance”. (If your decision is appealed, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance” on the fourth day following the City Hearing Examiner’s decision.) Projects requiring a Council land use action shall be considered “approved for issuance” following the Council’s decision.

The “approved for issuance” date marks the beginning of the **three year life** of the MUP approval, whether or not there are outstanding corrections to be made or pre-issuance conditions to be met. The permit must be issued by DPD within that three years or it will expire and be cancelled (SMC 23-76-028). (Projects with a shoreline component have a **two year life**. Additional information regarding the effective date of shoreline permits may be found at 23.60.074.)

All outstanding corrections must be made, any pre-issuance conditions met and all outstanding fees paid before the permit is issued. You will be notified when your permit has issued.

Questions regarding the issuance and expiration of your permit may be addressed to the Public Resource Center at [prc@seattle.gov](mailto:prc@seattle.gov) or to our message line at 206-684-8467.